

VZCZCXRO4764
OO RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHHM
DE RUEHDT #0040/01 0421230
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 111230Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY DILI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3847
INFO RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1022
RUEHXS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 1117
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 0817
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY IMMEDIATE 0029
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE 0903
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON IMMEDIATE 1007
RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 3270

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DILI 000040

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FOR EAP- MARCIEL AND EAP/MTS
PACOM FOR POLADS - CHRISTY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/11/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [AS](#) [TT](#)

SUBJECT: REBELS ATTACK TIMOR-LESTE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER

DILI 00000040 001.2 OF 003

CLASSIFIED BY: Henry M. Rector, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S.
Embassy Dili, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (U) Summary. On the morning of February 11, a small group of rebels affiliated with fugitive military dissident Alfredo Reinado mounted coordinated attacks on Timor-Leste President Jose Ramos-Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao. Ramos-Horta was seriously injured and has been flown to Darwin, Australia for hospitalization. Xanana Gusmao was uninjured. Reinado and one of his men were killed, and the remainder of his group remains at large. Dili has remained calm throughout the day, but the Prime Minister and Acting President have requested that Australia provide additional troops to the International Stabilization Force (ISF) already deployed in the country as well as a separate group of police to maintain public order. Australian PM Rudd has agreed, and also intends to visit Timor-Leste soon in order to demonstrate solidarity. As of 1830 local time on February 11, Xanana Gusmao was consulting with the Council of State and the Superior Council for Defense and Security, the two bodies of government legally mandated to deal with national emergencies. The GOTL has announced a 48-hour formal state of emergency with a curfew in effect from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. End summary.

Gunmen Attack President, Prime Minister

¶2. (SBU) The following account of the February 11 shootings is based on preliminary information; some of the details are subject to verification. At about 6:30 a.m., Timor-Leste President Jose Ramos-Horta was just outside of his residence taking his morning walk. At least one vehicle stopped outside the house. Major Alfredo Reinado, the armed military dissident who has been at large since August 2006, entered the compound and reportedly told the household staff that he intended to take President Ramos-Horta into the bush. One of the President's bodyguards recognized Reinado and open fire, killing him. At the sound of the shots, Ramos-Horta came back into his house and Reinado's followers opened fire, hitting the President twice in

the abdomen. The President's bodyguards then shot and killed one gunman. The remnant of Reinado's men fled. An ambulance was summoned and the President was taken to Aspen Clinic, an Australian contract facility supporting the International Stabilization Force (ISF), where he underwent surgery.

¶3. (SBU) Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao learned of the attack just after the ambulance was called to Ramos-Horta's compound and immediately left his residence. About 200 meters down the road, his convoy was ambushed by a group of armed men who had been lying in wait all night, according to local residents. The Prime Minister's security detail recognized them as known associates of Reinado, and a firefight ensued. No one was injured, although the two vehicles in the PM's convoy were disabled. The gunmen escaped. One of the Prime Minister's security guards flagged down a mini-bus and had it take Xanana Gusmao back to his residence.

PM Convenes UNMIT, ISF

¶4. (SBU) At about 10:00 a.m., Xanana Gusmao met with Finn Reske-Nielsen, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General and acting head of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), and ISF Commander Brigadier James Baker. Confusion still reigned this point, with the principals unsure whether Reinado was among those killed. The group decided to task the ISF, Armed Forces of Timor-Leste (F-FDTL), National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL), and UN Police Mission in Timor-Leste (UNPOL) to develop a plan to apprehend the remaining shooters and maintain public order.

Xanana Gusmao Requests Australian Help

DILI 00000040 002.2 OF 003

¶5. (SBU) Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao then placed a call to Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. According to Australian DCM, Rudd reaffirmed his commitment to Timor-Leste and expressed his intention to demonstrate this with a visit to the country over the next several days. Gusmao immediately agreed to this, and requested that PM Rudd augment the current level of the ISF (about 800 troops). Rudd agreed. Following the phone call, PM Gusmao followed up with a letter requesting "enhancement of the ADF presence in Timor-Leste and a separate contribution of police." The letter was cosigned by Vicente da Silva Guterres as Acting President and Maria da Paixao de Jesus da Costa as Acting President of the National Parliament. (Fernando Lasama de Araujo, the President of the National Parliament, would normally serve as Acting President, but he is on official travel to Lisbon. He plans to return to Dili on February 12. The job of Acting President therefore falls for the moment to the Acting Speaker of Parliament, Vicente Guterres.)

Deputy PM, ForMin Reassure Diplomatic Corps

¶6. (SBU) At about 11:00, it was confirmed to the GOTL that Alfredo Reinado was among the dead. Deputy Prime Minister Jose Luis Guterres and Foreign Minister Zacarias da Costa announced this at a briefing for the diplomatic corps convened at 12:00 p.m. at the Foreign Ministry. During this briefing, the two Ministers provided the account of the shooting as stated in paras 2 - 3 above, and expressed some concern that Reinado's supporters in Dili and the country's western districts might react violently when they learned of his death. They stressed that Dili had remained calm, and stated that the GOTL intended to proceed as usual to the greatest extent possible. They said that an ongoing conference of Ministers for Social Affairs from Portuguese-speaking countries would continue, and that they were not asking the Irish Foreign Minister to reschedule next week's planned visit. The Ministers noted that foreign civilians had

not been targeted in past episodes of unrest, and that foreign nationals in Timor-Leste had no cause for concern. In response to a question from Charge, the Ministers could not provide information concerning ongoing operations against the fugitive gunmen, but said that ISF and Timorese police and military would pursue the perpetrators.

Xanana, GOTL Present United Front To Press

¶7. (U) At about 2:00 p.m., the Prime Minister held a press conference. Xanana Gusmao was accompanied at the event by Acting President Guterres, F-FDTL Commander Taur Matan Ruak, National Police Commander Alfonso de Jesus, and Prosecutor General Longhinos Monteiro. He confirmed that Reinado was dead, and updated the media on Ramos-Horta's condition.

¶8. (U) Xanana Gusmao then sought to lay to rest a rumor that Reinado himself had been betrayed and ambushed en route to a meeting with Ramos-Horta. He called for calm, and announced that he was about to convene the Council of State and the Superior Council for Defense and Security, two bodies that have legal and constitutional responsibilities in times of national emergency. He said that the decisions coming out of these meetings would likely entail some temporary restrictions on movement and other freedoms. He called for the people's cooperation and understanding of such measures.

Ramos-Horta Airlifted to Darwin

¶9. (SBU) At 3:15 p.m. local time, President Ramos-Horta was airlifted to Darwin, Australia for hospitalization. According to Australian DCM, the President's condition was serious but stable and the "doctors believed he would survive."

F-FDTL Confined To Base

¶10. (SBU) MilRep reports that F-FDTL Commander Brigadier Taur
DILI 00000040 003.2 OF 003

Matan Ruak has ordered the Timorese military confined to base at this time, and that this order is being obeyed.

FRETILIN Reaction

¶11. (C) The opposition FRETILIN party, which over the past several weeks has associated itself with and even disseminated some of Reinado's criticisms of the current government, issued a strong condemnation of the attacks especially given "the President's tireless efforts to find a mechanism of national consensus to find solutions" to Timor-Leste's problems. Less helpfully, the media release quoted FRETILIN Secretary General Mari Alkatiri insinuating that lapses (or worse) by UNMIT and the ISF were to blame for "breaches in security" that led to the shootings.

PM Consults On Next Steps

¶12. (U) In the late afternoon of February 11, the Prime Minister convened two bodies to consult simultaneously on next steps. These were the Council of State and the Superior Council for Defense and Security. The Council of State, as defined by Section 90 of the Constitution, is an advisory body to the President made up of a mix of appointed members and government officials. The Superior Council for Defense and Security, described in Section 148, is a consultative entity on matters relating to defense and sovereignty, comprising both civilian

and military officials. We have no word on the outcome of these deliberations except that the GOTL has invoked a 48-hour state of emergency and imposed a curfew from 8:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m.

Comment

¶13. (C) Based on available evidence, today's events were not a coup attempt, but rather a failed assassination. There seems to have been no effort to replace the current government, but merely to decapitate it. Post attributes the non-violent reaction thus far in part to the fact that by attempting to murder two undisputed heroes of the resistance, Reinado forfeited any support he might have enjoyed. Secondly, the fact that Reinado died in this incident leaves his erstwhile supporters without a leader to rally around. However, we do not rule out the possibility of unrest in coming days, either in Dili or in the western districts where Reinado enjoyed considerable popularity.

RECTOR